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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

23 May 1983

SOMOCISTA INFLUENCE IN THE NICARAGUAN DEMOCRATIC FORCE

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Summary

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The Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN) has made major organizational changes in a partially successful attempt to shed its image as an organization dominated by followers of ex-President Anastasio Somoza. There is only one known ex-Somocista on the National Directorate. While most of its military commanders are former National Guard officers, we estimate only about 10 percent of the rank-and-file are former Guard members.

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FDN Directorate

The FDN National Directorate is the organization's political arm. The Directorate was reorganized last fall to bring in prestigious individuals who were not identified with former President Somoza. The Directorate is politically conservative but we believe it is committed to democratic goals.

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Some Directorate members have established anti-Somoza credentials:

-- Adolfo Calero, a prominent businessman, was a leader of the Democratic Conservative Party, the largest opposition party in Nicaragua.

This memorandum was requested by the Vice President. It was prepared by the Central America Branch, ALA. It was coordinated with the Directorate of Operations and the Office of Central Reference. It contains information available as of 20 May 1983. Questions and comments are welcome and should be addressed to Chief, Middle/America Caribbean Division, OALA,

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- Alfonso Callejas, although a former Vice President of Nicaragua under Somoza, resigned from his post in protest in 1972.
- Lucia Cardenal de Salazar is the widow of prominent businessman Jorge Salazar, who was killed by Sandinista security agents in 1980.
- Indalecio Rodriguez, a veterinarian, had been imprisoned in the 1950s for his opposition political activities.

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Two other Directorate members were not politically active:

- Marco Zeledon is a well-known businessman who occupied leadership positions in the Nicaraguan private sector.
- Edgar Chamorro is a businessman and former Dean of Humanities at the Central American University in Managua.

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One Directorate member did have ties to Somoza:

- Enrique Bermudez, a former Colonel in the National Guard under Somoza, is the Directorate member who serves as liaison to the FDN's military forces. Prior to the reorganization, he was Chief of the General Staff. Bermudez served as Nicaraguan Defense Attache in Washington from 1976-79. Although such an important position could not have been occupied by an individual who did not enjoy the full confidence of President Somoza, Bermudez's position abroad insulated him from association with human rights abuses during the height of the civil war.

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General Staff

All the ranking FDN military officials are former mid-level National Guard officers. The General Staff also was restructured last fall, and one individual with an unsavory reputation was replaced. We do not have any information that implicates the remaining members in human rights violations during the civil war, and none of them was closely identified with Somoza.

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The following are current General Staff members, approved by the Political Directorate on Bermudez's recommendation:

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Influence of Ex-Guardsmen in the FDN

We estimate that about 10 percent of the 5,000 FDN insurgents are former members of Somoza's Guard, although the FDN political leadership claims no more than 3 percent of its military forces are former Guardsmen. While the armed core of the FDN is largely ex-National Guard, most new recruits over the last year have been rural peasants and laborers from northwestern Nicaragua.

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The percentage of former Guardsmen in the insurgent forces probably will continue to decline as its total membership grows. The FDN has been able to attract additional peasants, small landowners, and laborers in its areas of operation. The FDN's image as being dominated by former Guardsmen probably will inhibit recruitment and popular support in urban areas, but it has not been a barrier to its rapid growth in northwestern Nicaragua.

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Shedding the Somocista Image

The organizational changes of last fall have been partially successful in helping the FDN to soften its image, as suggested by the willingness of government and party leaders in Western Europe, Central America, Colombia, and Venezuela to meet with National Directorate members. Some members of the political leadership of the Costa Rican-based Democratic Revolutionary Alliance (ARDE) have also made favorable comments about the FDN. ARDE leader Eden Pastora criticized the FDN again in the press last week, but it is noteworthy that his mid-April announcement of the initiation of military activities omitted any critical reference to the FDN.

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Because its military core is composed of former National Guardsmen, the FDN will nevertheless continue to have problems generating both internal Nicaraguan and international support. The FDN has concentrated its propaganda resources on attacking Sandinista excesses and on the necessity of returning Nicaragua to democratic rule, and not on disassociating itself from the Somocista past. Although the January 1983 policy statement outlining principles and goals rejected any effort to link the

FDN to the Somoza dictatorship, the organization's ability to generate wider support probably remains dependent on more explicit condemnation of Somoza and stronger endorsement of the original objectives of the revolution.

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